

VIP

Veterans Information Periodical

Issue 2, January 2009

For Eastern Colorado Health Care System Veterans

From the editorial staff, a **BIG WELCOME** to the first issue for 2009 of the Eastern Colorado Health Care System's **Veterans Information Periodical or VIP**. The **VIP** will keep veterans informed about health concerns, classes, and what is going on in the Denver Medical Center, as well as the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. Information is supplied by staff as well as veterans. We hope you enjoy this issue 2 and look forward to publishing many more issues in the future.

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The content of this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the opinions of, or include support of the Administration Board, Editorial Staff, or Department of Veterans Affairs.

Flu season is not over!
Protect yourself and your family----get your flu shot as soon as possible at the VA. Questions? Call (303)399-8020, ext. 7514

National Veterans Wheelchair Games

GAMES WITH HEART A MILE HIGH MINUTE

Denver will host one of the world's most strenuous and spirited athletic competitions in July 2010, when more than 500 wheelchair athletes from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain will arrive to compete in the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, *Games with Heart a Mile High*.

The Games, presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition because of spinal cord injuries, amputations, certain neurologi-

cal conditions or other mobility impairments. The 2010 event will be hosted by the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS) and the Mountain States Chapter (MSC) of PVA. Competitive events take place July 4-9, 2010.

Since October 2008, volunteers from both the MSC PVA and VA ECHCS have spent their Sunday afternoons working a concession stand at home Bronco games.

This fun fundraiser has been a great team building effort as well as a successful fund raiser for the Games. Because this program was successful and generated a lot of interest, the group will again staff a stand for the 2009 season. Volunteers are certainly welcome.

In November, staff from both VA ECHCS and MSC PVA participated in the Veterans Day parade. The float honored wheelchair athletes and celebrated Denver's 2010 selection.



For additional information about sponsorship or volunteer opportunities for the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, please contact Amanda Eckman at (720) 201-0455, or via email at amanda.eckman@va.gov



Should I take part in a research study?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ranks as one of the nation's leaders in health research. Thousands of studies are being conducted at VA medical centers, outpatient clinics, and nursing homes each year. This research has significantly contributed to health improvements for other veterans and many people from every walk of life.

OEF/OIF PROGRAM ALSO KNOWN AS RETURNING COMBAT VETERAN PROGRAM OR SEAMLESS TRANSITION PROGRAM

Services Offered:

- Compensation & Pension
- Counseling Services
- Case Management
- Dental Care
- Emergency Care
- Family Program
- Infectious Disease
- Mental Health Treatment
- Primary Care
- Physical Therapy
- Prosthetics
- Pharmacy
- Residential PTSD Program
- Social Services
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Sexual Trauma Services
- Stress Management
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Women's Health Services

For example, the VA has:

- Developed artificial limbs that allow amputees more independence and a better quality of life
- Invented the cardiac pacemaker
- Performed the first successful liver transplantation
- Played a major role in the development of the CT (or CAT) scan to view the inside of the body
- Tested new drugs and treatments for such disease as AIDS, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and osteoporosis
- Developed the nicotine patch to help people stop smoking.

We also have an OEF/OIF Clinic held every Thursday in Colorado Springs and every Friday in Denver. Veterans receive a complete physical by a Primary Care Provider, an assessment by a Combat Stress Specialist, a briefing by the Regional OEF/OIF Benefits Counselor, and a new veteran orientation class. We also have an Employment Specialist and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor available. It's a 1 stop shop for our returning combat veterans. We sincerely thank you for your service to our country.

***It's now our turn to
Serve You!***

None of the advances in health care would be possible without individuals willing to volunteer to take part in research. You may be asked to volunteer for a research study approved by this VA Medical Center. In future editions of this newsletter, additional information will be provided to help you understand some of the basic requirements for participating in a research study at VA ECHCS.

Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives — maybe your own. **Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.**

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New Evening Stop-Smoking Classes



Every other Wednesday
a one-time class is
held from
5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in
room 1B-100.
Walk-ins or returns for
refresher information
are welcomed!

Contact your PCP or
the specialty desk,
extension 5117, for
more information and
confirmation of class
times.

It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help....

**If you're in an emotional crisis
call 1-800-273-TALK "Press 1 for Veterans"**

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Department of Veterans Affairs

Proper Disposal of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs

Reasons for disposing of unusable, unwanted, or out-of-date drugs:

Keeping drugs you don't take can increase your risk of accidentally taking the wrong medicine

Drugs may have expired; therefore, they may not work as well

Keeping medicines you do not take can increase the risk of a child or pet getting them

Drugs are a hazardous waste and can be a threat to our environment. We must dispose of them properly!

How to dispose of these medications:

The best and safest thing to do is contact one of the following:

For instructions on how to dispose of your medications:

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Div.
Denver, Colorado

303-692-3320 or toll-free at 1-888-569-1831, 3320

The Household Hazardous Waste Disposal (for Denver County residents only) 1-800-449-7587 for instructions for them to come directly to your house. Can also email them your name, address, and phone number to www.hotline@curbsideinc.com and they will call you back.

To see options for disposal of wastes in counties other than Denver County, residents can go to www.cdphe.state.co.us/HM/hhwcollect.htm#D

If you decide to throw your medications in the trash, please follow these steps to decrease waste and abuse, improve safety, and protect your privacy:

Remove drugs from their containers, mark out name on container and throw it in the trash.

Make as unappealing as possible by crushing tablets, mixing with water, and then mixing the medication with undesirable things such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter.

Securely wrap the medicine mixture in a sealable plastic bag. Then you can wrap this in several layers of newspaper. Put this in

Denver VA Medical Center Home Oxygen Program

The **Home Oxygen Program** office at the Denver VA is open from 8:00 to 4:30, Monday through Friday. The office phone is 303-399-8020, ext. 2781.

Renewal of the oxygen prescription is required before the first six months have passed from the initial oxygen order, and then once per year after that. Patients are sent a renewal reminder letter two months before their prescription expires. If they are unable to see their primary care provider before the expiration date, a Home Oxygen Clinic is held on Mondays and Wednesdays, by appointment only. Appointments can be made by Phylis at 303-399.8020, ext. 2179 once the renewal letter is received.

Oxygen Safety Tips

- **DO NOT SMOKE WHILE WEARING OXYGEN!**
- Any oxygen equipment needs to be turned off and the patient needs to be 15 feet away from any source of flame before lighting a cigarette.
- Store oxygen away from any heat source and do not store tanks or liquid oxygen in areas where the temperature can reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Oxygen tanks should be securely stored in tank racks provided by the home oxygen company and no more than 12 tanks may be stored in the home at one time.
- Make sure there is a working smoke detector in the home. Never use grease or oil on oxygen equipment. Oil based face creams or salves (Vaseline/petroleum jelly) and oxygen in contact with bare skin will cause surface burns. Please use water based products such as surgilube or KY jelly for sensitive areas around the nose and lips that become irritated from continuous nasal cannula use.

Traveling with Oxygen

Patients on the VA Home Oxygen Program will need to contact the Rotech Travel Department when planning for their oxygen needs away from home. Their number is 1-800-514-9342.

- Federal regulations prohibit patients from using their own home oxygen equipment on commercial flights.
- Most airlines require at least 48 hours notice of need for oxygen before flying. They may also require a letter from a physician and completion of a form before the trip. Please allow plenty of time to complete these tasks and plan ahead.
- Airlines will charge a separate fee for use of their oxygen on the flight.
- Call the VA Home Oxygen staff for additional travel assistance.

a trash bag, out of reach of children and pets, and wait to put it out for the garbage pick-up until around your pick up time.

Do not flush drugs down the toilet unless you are told to do so!

Please DO NOT bring ANY medications to the pharmacy—we CANNOT take them back.

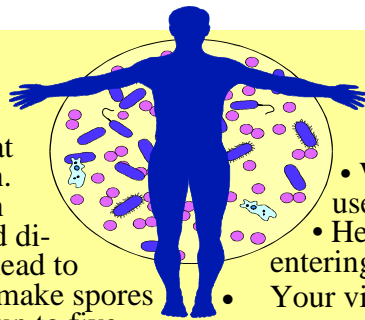


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Eastern Colorado Health Care System
1055 Clermont Street
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INFECTION CONTROL CORNER

What is *C. difficile*?

Clostridium difficile is a type of bacteria that can live in the environment and in the colon. The symptoms of a *C. difficile* infection can include abdominal discomfort, bloating, and diarrhea. In severe or untreated cases, it can lead to bowel perforation. The *C. difficile* bacteria make spores that can live on environmental surfaces for up to five months.



Clostridium Difficile.... What you need to know!

- Wash your hands before you eat and after you use the bathroom.
- Health care staff will wash their hands before entering and after leaving your room.
- Your visitors will wash their hands before entering and after leaving your room.

How is *C. difficile* spread?

C. difficile is spread through direct contact and it is transmitted through the fecal-oral route. When a patient gets infected with *C. difficile*, unwashed hands can spread the bacteria and the spores throughout the environment. Toilet seats, door knobs, bed rails, faucets, linens, clothing and hands can become contaminated. We can stop the spread of *C. difficile* with good hand washing, contact precautions and environmental cleanliness.

Who gets *C. difficile*?

People at risk for *C. difficile*:

- take antibiotics
- have chemotherapy
- have abdominal surgery
- have stomach or intestine problems
- are already sick and in the hospital

Hand washing!

C. difficile can spread from patient to patient in the hospital. It is very important to take steps to prevent *C. difficile* from spreading. • Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Do not use the alcohol hand gel because it will not kill the *C. difficile* spores.

Contact precautions!

While you are in the hospital, Contact Precautions will be used to prevent the spread of *C. difficile*. Our Contact Precaution practices keep you safe during your stay with us:

- You may be placed in a private room.
- Patients with *C. difficile* stay in their rooms except for essential medical appointments.
- Health care staff will gown and glove before entering the room. Your visitors will also be asked to gown and glove.
- Health care staff and visitors will wash hands before entering and after leaving your room. Only use soap and water for hand washing. Do not use alcohol gel.



**Hand washing is the
single most effective way
to prevent the spread of
infection.**

**Protect yourself and others by washing
your hands.**